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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2007

In Today's Papers

Prime Minister and Air Force Commander deny Turkish strikes in Northern Iraq

All papers report that, after four Turkish soldiers were killed in clashes with the PKK, Turkish forces carried out air and ground operations in the Gabar Mountains. Mainstream Vatan claims that American U-2 "spy planes" have begun to patrol the Turkey-Iraq border in order to monitor the activities of the PKK. On Wednesday, Turkish journalists in Batman and Cukurca claimed to have seen U-2 planes. Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet and mainstream Milliyet report that Pesmerge forces are forming a buffer zone in Northern Iraq in order to prevent the PKK from crossing into Turkey and to cut their logistical support routes.

Papers quote Foreign Minister Ali Babacan, during budget debates in parliament, stating that "as of today (Wednesday)," the US had started to supply Turkey with "real-time intelligence" concerning the activities of the PKK. "We have started to strengthen the direct channels for communication and coordination regarding military, diplomatic and political measures against the PKK," Babacan said. The Turkish Foreign Ministry (MFA,) however, released a statement saying that Babacan was not referring to specific developments that unfolded yesterday, but to the overall situation after the meeting between Prime Minister Erdogan and President Bush.

Meanwhile, Turkish Air Forces Commander General Aydogan Babaoglu dismissed reports claiming air strikes took place against targets in northern Iraq. Prime Minister Erdogan later said that "a cross border operation is out of the question for the time being, we have operations inside Turkey. The Kurdistan regional government also denied the reports that Turkish forces bombed Iraqi sites on Tuesday morning.

MHP Wants Kurdish DTP Immunities Lifted

All papers report far right party MHP drafted a parliamentary motion to restrict parliamentary immunities for crimes violating the

integrity of state. This appears to be an effort aimed at pro-Kurdish DTP lawmakers. MHP is trying to garner the 110 signatures needed to take the draft to the floor from the AKP and CHP. PM Erdogan indicated the AKP does not support the MHP effort, saying he will not try "undemocratic" ways to expel people who were sent to parliament through popular democratic vote. Opposition CHP wants parliamentary immunities scrapped completely, according to papers.

Turkey to construct airport on Iraq border
Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak and tabloid Aksam carry Transport Minister Binali Yildirim's announcement that the construction of an airport in Yuksekova in Hakkari province, on the border with Iraq, will begin in 2008 and be completed by 2010. Papers say the airport triggered speculation that, due to the frequent visits to the region by American delegations, the US was preparing to set up a military base there. Aksam argues the base could be used in air strikes against Iran while Yeni Safak claims it could be used in the fight against the PKK.

Editorial commentary on the PKK and Kurdish Policy
Hasan Cemal observed in mainstream Milliyet (11/15): "Kurdish politicians should distance themselves from PKK violence, influence the PKK to declare a serious cease-fire and engage in immense efforts to open the doors for democratic politics. The DTP is an important party for me; its efforts in the parliament can help peace and stability in this country immensely. Unfortunately, the DTP is making big mistakes. They should realize that the doors for peace, democracy, and freedom cannot be opened by terrorist activities. If the DTP plans to get the PKK accepted in Turkish politics, they are mistaken. This will only increase tension in Turkey and strengthen those who don't support democracy.

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Turkey is going through a difficult phase. Possible operations against northern Iraq are getting closer. It is understood that, in order to please the public, operations against the PKK will be launched before winter sets in. In addition, the Iraqi Kurdish Leadership and the US are applying intense pressure on the PKK to begin a cease-fire. There are also allegations that the US will force the PKK into a cease-fire and pull the PKK from Turkey in order to direct it to Iran through PJAK. Following a cease-fire, a new process is planned by the Turkish government in the southeast. The doors will open for high level dialogue with northern Iraq. Then, the PKK will be brought down from the mountains. With the application of economic, social, political and military measures, the PKK will be fully isolated. We cannot know to what extent this scenario can be implemented. However, we can only hope that such measures will eliminate terrorism, violence and hostile feelings in Turkey."

TV Highlights
NTV

Domestic News

- Istanbul Municipality kicks off preparations for building a third bridge on the Bosphorus in Istanbul.
- The Egitim-Sen labor union of education workers and construction engineers objects to the Istanbul Municipality's plans to build parking places under 147 schools in the city.
- A survey conducted by the Turkish radio and television agency RTUK shows that Turks living in Germany watch Turkish TV channels for four hours a day.
- World Bank Turkey director Ulrich Zachau said structural reforms and increased productivity were vital for competition with Far East countries.

International News

- Iraqi President Jalal Talabani, in an interview with a Kuwaiti newspaper on Wednesday, said tensions between Iraq and Turkey have

subsided and relations are improving.

- A senior Russian general has said Russia could place missiles in neighboring Belarus to counter a planned US missile defense system in Eastern Europe.

- The European Parliament's far-right bloc has collapsed after five Romanian MEPs resigned over an Italian colleague's "xenophobic" remarks.

- The US said it denied a visa for South African scholar Adam Habib because he "engaged in terrorist activity." Habib, deputy vice chancellor at the University of Johannesburg, is also a well known critic of the war in Iraq.

WILSON